

Turkey N TATURs 50K, Tulsa, Oklahoma
Sep 17, 2006

By Gabe Bevan, Kansas City Trail Nerd

I decided to run the Turkey and Tatur's 50k since it fell about 4 weeks before my first 100 mile attempt, so I could use it for a good change of scenery training run and it was only a modest 4 ½ hr drive from the Kansas City area. I told Rick Mayo about the race and he decided to give it a try also.

We arrived in Tulsa Saturday evening, picked up our race packets filled with goodies including a water bottle, recovery caps, sunscreen, a nice Mizuno tech T and a few other items. We then headed to the YMCA where the race started. We walked about ½ mile of the trail to see what the terrain was like. I guess I associated the name Turkey and Tatur's with an easy course but that thought was quickly erased after going up the first section of trail. Our shoes were pretty full of debris so we both opted to go with gaiters in the morning. After an excellent dinner at Carrabbas, we headed to the hotel to get things ready for the morning. I checked the weather channel which showed highs in the mid 70's with a chance for rain, seemed like pretty good conditions.

About 6:20 we headed out for the start of the race, stepping out the door I was surprised to be greeted by 95% humidity and 84 degrees. I went back in to check the weather again and the front hadn't arrived yet, but there was a very large glob of red and yellow moving towards Tulsa on the radar. We arrived at the start at got the last minute preparations in order. The race director, Brian Hoover, summoned the runners to the start line. Everyone was staying in the back so Rick and I moved to the very front. I guess all of the 10k and 25k runners weren't planning on going out too fast.

Brian said go and we were gone. Everyone seemed to be a little hesitant at first. A few runners passed by in the first couple miles, I was expecting to see a lot more go by since all of the distances started together. This was a two loop course for the 50k, 1 loop for the 25k, all of the 10k split off about 3 miles in. Around 4 miles in, the thunder became very ominous sounding. We hit a nice open stretch before a long hill and talked with Alex Eaton for a bit, he was using this race for his last long run before tapering for the AT100. He was pretty familiar with the course and gave us a few ideas of what was ahead. The heat on top of the extremely rocky course took its toll quickly over the first few miles.

When I say rocky, I don't mean flat rocks and pebbles; I am talking about the kind that seem to stick out of the ground like daggers. I don't think I ever have seen so many pointed rocks in my life. I told Rick I wish I would have worn my mountain bike helmet. I was breathing a bit heavier than I should be for so early in a 50k so I slowed back a bit.

It was about 6 miles in when the winds began to pick up and bring a little cooler temperature. The rain began to fall lightly at first, we could hear it, but the trail was covered by trees so not much was getting to the ground. About 10 minutes later it began

to rain heavily, which made the rocks sharp and slippery. Alex was about 50 feet in front of Rick and I when he took a nasty face plant, but luckily he slid between two rocks, just shy of going headfirst into a tree. I was amazed how quickly he got up and was back in stride.

The next 5 miles were pretty much wet and rocky with constantly falling temperatures. I noticed a little more distance between myself and the group of 5 I was following, I decided to keep my pace and not try to keep up with them. I stopped quickly at the aid station and the wonderful volunteers filled my bottles. They said it was 1.9 miles to the next aid station, but did not mention that it was mostly straight up. I saw the "hill" shortly after exiting the aid station. It was a long mowed stretch which I believe followed the power lines. It was very muddy by this time so I tried to stay to the side to get better traction. After reaching the top, the next aid station was manned by a very enthusiastic gentleman dressed in slacks, dress shirt and a bow tie. He and the other aid station workers were great. Only 3.8 miles left to the start/finish

This was my favorite part of the trail, it seemed mostly flat, and I got a good pace going and cruised to the start/finish. I saw Rick leaving the start/finish about 2 minutes ahead of me. My wife handed me 2 new water bottles and I was off again. I caught up to Rick about a mile later. I hung with him for about 2 miles then he was gone. I decided to try to get a little better look around at the scenery this time around. It was still pouring down rain and the trail was covered in several inches of water. I meant to grab my IPOD for the second loop since I knew I was going to be running mostly alone but I had forgot to pick it up at start/finish. I was feeling pretty good and going through a flat section when I heard a loud cracking noise. I looked up and a huge branch fell right in front of me. It landed with the sharp broken end first and stood on end about a foot impaled in the mud. If I had not heard it, it likely would have gone through me instead of the mud. Good thing I forgot my IPOD. That thought occupied my mind as I ran the next several miles.

There were a few stretches along the course which opened up and there were beautiful views of the Arkansas River below. Also several sections where there were huge boulders alongside the trail, one of which I briefly thought was an aid station tent. The course was so rocky that the water was standing on the trail and it was like running through a creek. I have been doing a lot of long runs for the last 2 months, it seemed once I hit 20 miles I got my wind and was moving at a decent pace until I came to the "hill" again. This time it was really cold and the wind was ripping through the long open stretch, now the hill was more like a river from the hours of constant rain. It took a bit more effort to get up this time. Once I was about to the top I looked up and there was a guy pointing a camera at me. I really don't like to have my picture taking while walking so I looked back down at the ground. I figured it was too late; Rick was the only other person wearing Kansas City Trail Nerds shirt, and being that he is about 55 pounds less than me. I was had.

The last few miles were good, I was getting some bad leg cramps the last mile but I could hear the start/finish so I was able to run through them to the end.

I ended up with a time of 5:36, good for 6th place behind Rick in 5th place. I had hoped to be closer to 5 hours and finish in the top 5 but I can always say I was just using it as a training run. I overheard someone say they thought the course was more difficult than Flatrock, which I have heard is a very challenging course. We hung around the finish for about 2 hours and enjoyed some good food, met some nice people and even won a few door prizes. This was an excellent event and Brian Hoover did a great job with a first time race. The aid station volunteers were very helpful and supportive, especially considering they were out in pouring cold rain all day. I hope to make it back next year.

Gabe Bevan